Dear Members of the Board of Education,

We had the opportunity to meet with Dr. McGinnis last Friday to review the results of the DLR study. She wanted us to see firsthand the results of the survey as well as what may be discussed at tonight's school board meeting. We want to share our thoughts and perspectives with you all since we are working in those buildings daily and see the effects of the inequities at the middle school level.

As the principals of the district's four middle schools, we ask the Board to decide in November whether Bode, Truman, or both schools will close as part of the district's middle school reorganization for 2027–28. Staff at both Bode and Truman have been aware since last year's high school reorganization that further middle school consolidation was probable. A decision this month would give staff, students, and families clarity and give us the time we need to plan for next year.

We saw the cost of prolonged uncertainty during last year's reorganization. At Robidoux, as the decision about whether the school would close went back and forth, staff morale suffered. Once there was a clear decision, staff could begin preparing for what came next. A November decision would let us start staffing conversations earlier, coordinate classroom assignments and teacher teams, build student schedules, and give families clear information about the transition.

We are already seeing inequities in facilities and staffing across our middle schools. Those inequities could grow as buildings face staffing reductions. Teachers meet weekly virtually to align lessons and common assessments because some are the only teacher in their building teaching a particular grade and subject. This has been very challenging for those teachers to collaborate consistently, and we believe that consolidation, staffing, and scheduling decisions can give those teachers a colleague to plan with in the same building. Our students are already playing together successfully on co-op teams, and shuttles between schools often leave athletes arriving late to practice.

Moving Bode students to Lafayette is one option. Mrs. Gaul supports this move and reports that Lafayette serves about 530 students and operates at approximately 32% capacity. Making fuller use of the building would give more students access to its science labs, three gymnasiums, football field, and track. Additional classroom space could help expand electives, and coordinated staffing could improve access to certified teachers. Lafayette could organize students into teams of about 125 who share a core group of teachers while choosing electives based on their interests. That structure would help students build relationships with a consistent group of teachers and peers. Lafayette has received positive feedback from families about this year's transition to a larger school.

We know this is a difficult decision. We ask the Board to make it in November so we can work together on a transition that gives students access to strong instruction, a wider range of opportunities, and a school community where they feel they belong.

Respectfully,

Dr. Alex Tomes, Principal of Spring Garden Middle School
Mrs. Megan Gaul, Principal of Lafayette Middle School
Mrs. Landi Quinlin, Principal of Truman Middle School
Mr. Corey Gilpin, Principal of Bode Middle School